



## PART 4: THE URBAN COUNTY

### INTRODUCTION

*Master Plan 2010* makes a distinction between the urban and rural areas of the county. This is done to emphasize that county policy and action differs between these two areas, for the overall benefit of all county residents. Within the urban areas, emphasis is placed upon economic development, public safety, education, and community conservation. Maintaining the county's older communities as viable, attractive places to live and work requires a concerted effort by county government and residents. Issues pertaining to housing, infrastructure, education, workforce development, economic development, health, safety, recreation, the environment, and community stewardship are all intertwined and must be addressed together in order to assure the continuing success of the county's urban communities. Strengthening the urban communities will result in a strengthening of the rural areas of the county as well; viable urban areas reduce the development pressure placed on the rural areas.

The urban areas lie within the urban rural demarcation line (URDL). The URDL was originally established to delineate the areas of the county that receive public water and sewer utilities, and thus support higher development densities. Now, much of the area within the URDL has been developed. More than 650,000 people live within this urban area of the county, comprising about 90% of the county's population.

Bordering the eastern end of Baltimore County, and including land both inside and outside of the URDL, are 173 miles of waterfront. Baltimore County's waterfront is an important asset to the county and the Chesapeake Bay region. Much of the privately owned waterfront is developed in a combination of dense residential and industrial uses. The undeveloped waterfront has protected shoreline that includes public parks, woodlands, and agricultural lands. Future development and redevelopment of the waterfront should be undertaken in a way that conserves and enhances existing waterfront communities while balancing the use of the waterfront as a natural amenity, a recreational resource, a source of economic opportunity, and a place where people live.

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The land management areas of the urban county consist of community conservation areas (CCAs), growth areas, employment areas, and the Towson Urban Area (Map 30). The CCAs, which are the county's older, established communities, contain both residential and commercial areas. These commercial areas include the older villages such as Catonsville, Pikesville, Essex, and Dundalk, as well as smaller neighborhood shopping areas and the radial commercial corridors. The land management areas are discussed in detail in the section entitled "Urban Land Management."

Problems that can affect any urban area include poor school performance, resident transience, concentrations of low income residents, inadequate service provision, loss of local business, traffic congestion, poor air quality, deteriorating housing/infrastructure, and heightened fear of crime. The 1989 master plan called for community conservation initiatives, namely a program of "public and private efforts designed to maintain or enhance the physical, social and economic resources of the county's older, urban area communities." *Master Plan 2010's* urban strategy calls for continuing substantial community conservation efforts, reinvesting in Baltimore County's urban areas to ensure stability, support our agricultural industry, and maintain value.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### INTRODUCTION

***A comprehensive range of business uses is encouraged in suitable locations, with a focus on "export" businesses.***

Baltimore County's economic development mission is three-fold: 1) to create employment opportunities that provide family supporting income for its citizens by retaining and expanding the existing business base and attracting new businesses to the county and the Baltimore region; 2) to secure the long-term well-being of Baltimore County citizens and communities by ensuring the county's ability to expand its economy well into the future; and 3) to protect its agricultural industry to ensure its viability. In addition, the economic development program recognizes the county's urban and rural distinctions. In the urban areas, a comprehensive range of business uses is encouraged in suitable locations, with a focus on "export" businesses. In the rural areas, the agricultural industry, which is the county's largest business land use and contributes in excess of \$400 million annually to the county's economy, is also supported. The economic development program for the agricultural industry is discussed in the rural section of *Master Plan 2010*.

Quality jobs and a high level of employment promote strong families and communities. When residents have good jobs, the incidence of family stress and social problems is reduced, home ownership increases, and homeowners have the resources to better maintain their properties and, by extension, their neighborhoods. Similarly, well-employed individuals make strong consumers, who buy the goods and services produced by other businesses and strengthen the health of the area's overall economy. The county therefore focuses its economic development effort on ensuring that residents have quality employment opportunities — both now and in the future.



The county's economic development program focuses primary attention on retaining, expanding and attracting the operating facilities and corporate headquarters of "export" businesses — regional and national companies that export goods and services out of the metropolitan area and thereby bring new wealth into the region. Export industries are: manufacturing; back-office operations and call centers; finance and insurance; warehouse distribution; and technology. If the county is successful in promoting local investment by these "wealth producing" industries, the necessary service and retail development will naturally follow on its own.

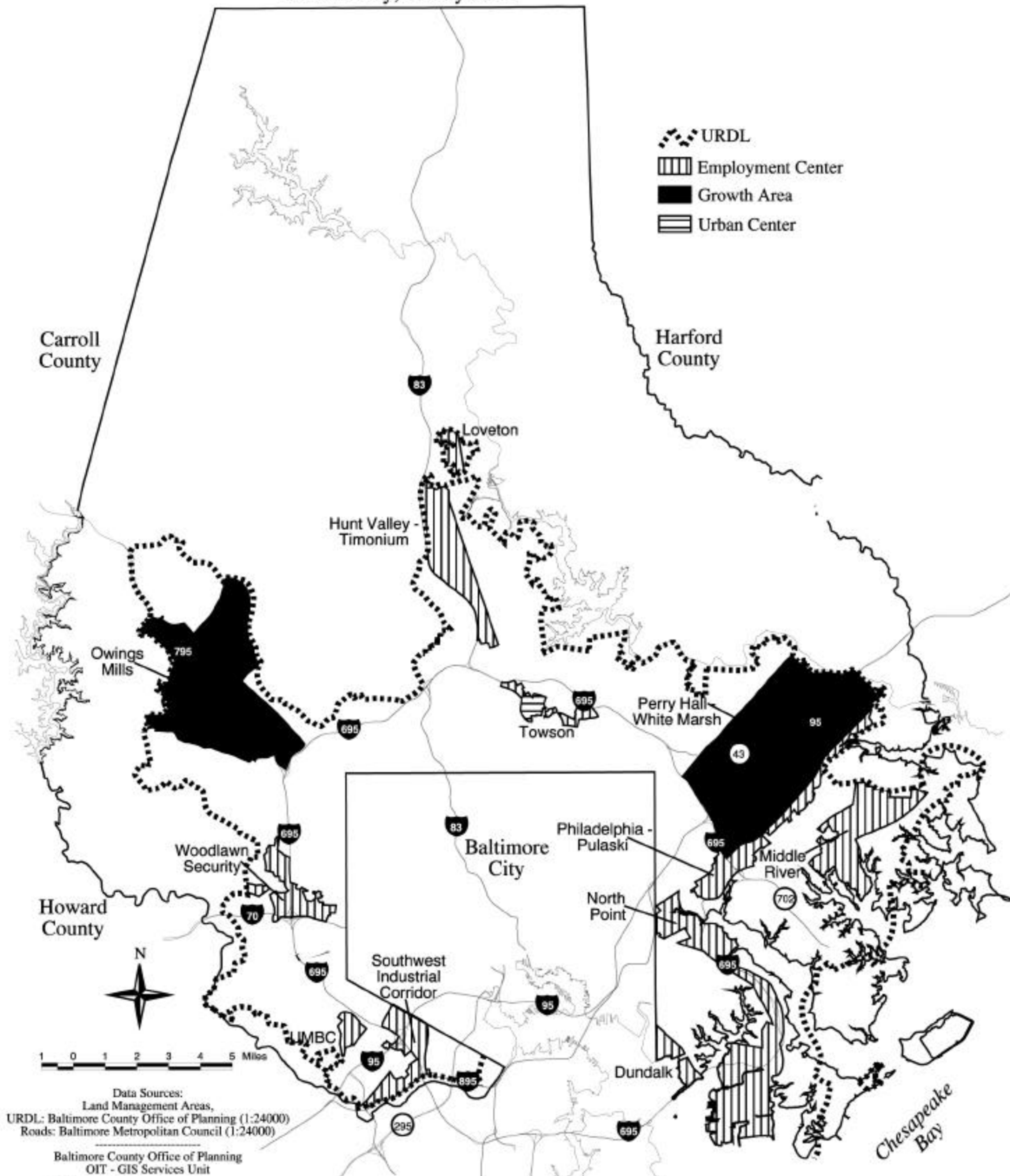
In addition to traditional "export" industries represented by manufacturing and corporate headquarter operations, tourism is an important industry that results in the infusion of dollars into the local and regional economy by individuals who visit for a day, a week, or a month. To increase the number of tourist dollars captured within the region, Baltimore County contributes to regional efforts to develop and promote Baltimore County destinations. In particular, the nearly 200 miles of waterfront located on the eastern part of the county are being evaluated to identify opportunity sites for the development and promotion of waterfront destinations accessible by land and water.

Many factors influence business decisions regarding expansion and relocation. County government works to ensure that the county's physical infrastructure, business climate, land use regulations, and other policies and plans support business development and growth. A concerted effort continues to attract major new investment to the targeted growth areas and employment centers (Map 5). The County Council has adopted area revitalization strategies for both the eastern and southwestern areas, to enhance their potential to attract business and strengthen the fabric of



*Waterfront areas are being evaluated for the development and promotion of tourist destinations accessible by land and water.*

# York County, Pennsylvania



**Map 5**  
**Employment Centers, Growth Areas, and Urban Area**

residential communities in these older areas. State enterprise zones have been designated for the North Point corridor and the southwest industrial area to provide tax incentives for business location and expansion (Map 6). The county has embarked on a “waterfront” strategy designed to enhance the waterfront resource as a means of improving the quality of life, image, and the investment climate in eastern Baltimore County.



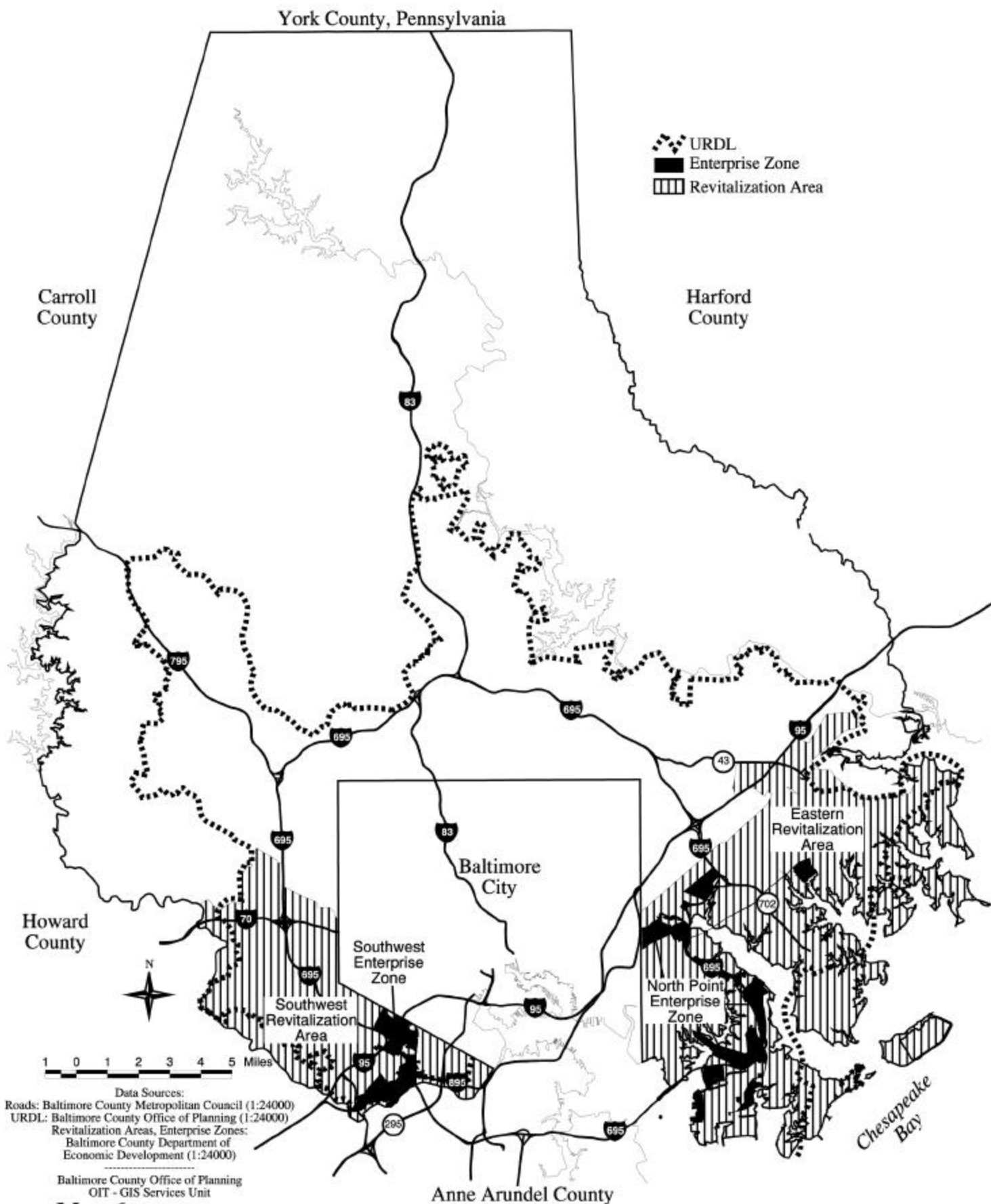
The economic development program also focuses increased attention on strengthening the 12 designated Commercial Revitalization Districts (Map 23). The revitalization districts are discussed in the Commercial Community Conservation Areas section. In partnership with the Commercial Revitalization Action Group (CRAG), the Department of Economic Development’s restructured Commercial Revitalization Program directs technical and financial assistance to these areas in an effort to foster business growth and appropriate, quality redevelopment.

An educated work force must be the cornerstone of any successful economic development strategy. The skill levels of the local work force can be the critical factor in a company’s decision to locate or remain in an area. County businesses reported in a survey that the quality and availability of labor were among their top concerns. Work force development begins at the earliest stages of citizens’ lives and is based on a strong system of public education.

Sought-after, skilled workers are more likely to continue to live in their neighborhoods and in the county if they feel satisfied with conditions in their communities, such as good schools and other public services, efficient transportation systems, low crime rates, and stable property values. Strong, stable residential communities strengthen the county’s ability to attract new employers as well. Thus, the county’s economic development and community conservation efforts go hand in hand.

Baltimore County’s economy is highly integrated with the economies of the other jurisdictions in the region, as evidenced by the patterns of people commuting to work. Consequently, regional conditions can have a large impact on the county’s economy. A healthy regional economy contributes to the employment of county residents and helps to maintain their high standard of living. Similarly, plant closings or corporate downsizing in other Baltimore region jurisdictions can cause Baltimore County residents to lose

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**Map 6**

**Economic Development Program Areas**

their jobs and reduce the overall level of wealth in the regional economy. It is in the county's interest to cooperate with other jurisdictions to bring new business investment to the area.



## POLICIES

- Retain, expand and attract businesses that provide jobs with family supporting wages, and sustain investment, with emphasis on “export” companies that bring new wealth into the region.
- Ensure that plans, physical infrastructure, business climate, and land use regulations position the county as a premier location for such business development and growth.
- Foster the successful redevelopment of well-situated vacant and underutilized commercial and industrial properties throughout the county.
- Maintain a top-notch work force through close coordination among institutions: economic development; employment and training agencies; the public schools and colleges; and the business community.
- Ensure that the growth areas, employment centers, and Commercial Revitalization Districts continue to receive the infrastructure necessary to attract new business investment.
- Focus special attention on strengthening the ability of older commercial and industrial areas to support new and expanded business activity.
- Nurture small and start-up businesses.
- Promote the development and commercialization of technology-based products and services.
- Cooperate with regional jurisdictions to market the Baltimore region successfully, to companies throughout the United States and the world, as a superior business location.
- Cooperate with regional jurisdictions to market the Baltimore region successfully as a tourist and convention destination.
- Work cooperatively with local chambers of commerce and business development associations.
- Protect and promote the agricultural industry.

***The county will focus special attention on strengthening the ability of older commercial and industrial areas to support new and expanded business activity.***

## ISSUES AND ACTIONS

Economic development issues facing the county include ensuring an adequate supply of strategically located land appropriate for development, facilitating the quality redevelopment of vacant and underutilized commercial and





industrial sites, strengthening the work force, and taking a more active role in decisions affecting the Port of Baltimore.

### **Issue: Availability of Appropriate Land for Export Businesses**

Baltimore County's ability to continue to attract new export businesses in coming years will depend to a large extent on the availability of land with the appropriate zoning served by infrastructure. This is especially true in the Owings Mills and Perry Hall-White Marsh Growth Areas, the Hunt Valley/Timonium and Middle River Employment Centers, and the North Point and Southwest Enterprise Zones.

Regardless of location, a property will only be appealing to a major employer if it has the necessary roadway access and water and sewer service for it to be developed. The county must continue to ensure that investments in roads, utilities, schools, and housing support the future economic development potential of its key employment centers. Investing in these key employment centers will benefit the tax base and employment base of the rest of the county.

In the *Baltimore County Zoning Regulations*, the zones that are suitable for regional- and national- serving export businesses are ML (manufacturing-light), MH (manufacturing-heavy), OT (office and technology) and other office zones. However, the county's supply of land with these zoning classifications—particularly ML—is threatened by pressure from landowners to develop retail uses on the land. Landowners understandably prefer retail uses over other uses because retailers can pay much more (often five times more) per acre of land than other uses can. A property owner who pays an “ML-zone” price for land and is able to sell or lease that land for a “B-zone” use stands to make a large profit. However, it is in the county's interest to maintain a long-term land management perspective and not allow the inventory of prime manufacturing and office land to be eroded incrementally to meet individual landowner's short-term needs.



*Big box retail is using the limited supply of manufacturing-zoned land.*

The threat to employment-intensive zoning has taken two main forms. In some cases owners of land targeted for employment uses have requested and been granted zoning map changes from manufacturing or office zones to “business” zones that permit retail and service uses. In other cases, landowners have successfully petitioned zoning officials for broad zoning regulation interpretations that permit extensive amounts of retail and service development in ML zones, based on provisions for “auxiliary” uses.



## Actions

1. Review and revise the industrial and office zoning categories, which are intended for employment-intensive uses, to ensure that retail uses are strictly limited.
2. Preserve the existing inventory of land with ML, MH, OT, and other office zoning during rezoning processes, so that it will be available for the establishment of export businesses. When rezoning requests are submitted, the Office of Planning should work with the Department of Economic Development to assess the marketability of the site with its existing zoning. Factors to consider include: size and configuration of the property; its proximity to other industrial properties; its ability to provide jobs with family-supporting income; the availability and condition of infrastructure; and any applicable environmental issues.
3. Give high priority in the capital improvement program to projects that enhance the growth areas and employment centers as places to locate a business.



## Issue: Availability of Promising, Well-Packaged Redevelopment Opportunity Sites

The county must continue to attract new industrial and commercial development to replace well-paying manufacturing jobs lost in the region over the past two decades, while improving the health and quality of life for residents, and continuing to protect the Chesapeake Bay and undeveloped property called “greenfields.” Part of that assessment must include an evaluation of the economic development potential of property located adjacent to the waterfront, while recognizing limits imposed by environmental constraints and recreational needs. To do so, the county needs to overcome obstacles – including environmental questions – to redeveloping sites in the county’s older areas.

As Baltimore County has matured, many of its older commercial and industrial areas have seen an increase in the number of problem properties that lie vacant or underutilized. These properties represent a significant financial cost in terms of unrealized property tax revenue and jobs, and they can become a visual blight for surrounding communities. Many have significant market potential because of their location or other features, but for a variety of reasons, the private sector alone has been unable to carry out redevelopment in these key locations. Areas with potential for redevelopment include the Eastern Revitalization Area, the Southwestern Revitalization Area, and the twelve commercial revitalization districts



*The county will evaluate the economic development potential of property located adjacent to the waterfront for employment use.*



(Arbutus, Catonsville, Woodlawn, Pikesville, Liberty Road, Reisterstown, Towson, Loch Raven, Parkville, Overlea, Essex, and Dundalk) (Map 23). Some of the reasons redevelopment has been difficult are:

- multiple ownership of vacant adjacent parcels, making land assembly difficult if not impossible;
- for a particular site, absence of a unified redevelopment strategy around which property owners can rally;
- absence of a catalyst to facilitate timely development by convening involved parties, brokering agreements, and involving public agencies where appropriate;
- real or perceived environmental contamination; and
- high redevelopment costs due to the need for demolition or major renovation.

Industrial and commercial sites with real or perceived environmental contamination are called “brownfields.” The extent of the industrial contamination problem in Baltimore County is unknown. However, given the county’s history of extensive heavy manufacturing – especially in the southeastern and southwestern areas – there is a strong likelihood that environmental concerns will hamper redevelopment of vacant or underutilized sites.

### **Actions**

1. Intensify efforts to return vacant or underutilized industrial and commercial properties to productive use.
2. Strengthen the existing legislative authority to establish a public or quasi-public redevelopment authority with the power to acquire and redevelop property and to address obstacles to redevelopment of vacant properties in commercial revitalization districts, enterprise zones, and community conservation areas. Include a mechanism to ensure input from representatives and residents of affected areas.



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### **Issue: Competitiveness of the Port of Baltimore**

The Port of Baltimore consists of the terminals and other facilities in the Baltimore Harbor that support international trade. A port is an important wealth-generating asset for a region because it makes possible the cost-effective import and export of goods. This trade with other nations and regions of the United States contributes directly and indirectly to tens of thousands of jobs. However, the Port of Baltimore faces stiff competition from other ports and must continually improve its competitive advantage

relative to Norfolk, Philadelphia, and other east coast competitors. One way local jurisdictions can support the port is by facilitating the redevelopment of underused land near the waterfront.



### **Action**

Through the multi-jurisdictional Port Land Use Committee, identify and enact measures to promote timely redevelopment of waterfront land and uniform zoning treatment of waterfront land among jurisdictions.